

1 Introduction, Mandates, and Statement of Mission

1.1 2003 Reorganization of State Agencies and Effects on this Plan

A major change has taken place in the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs during the preparation of this document for public review. On June 30, 2003, Governor Mitt Romney signed legislation that merged the Metropolitan District Commission (MDC) and the Department of Environmental Management (DEM) into the new Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). Within the new Department of Conservation and Recreation are three Divisions: the Division of Urban Parks and Recreation (DUPR), the Division of State Parks and Recreation (DSPR), and the Division of Water Supply Protection (DWSP, formerly the MDC/Division of Watershed Management).

While the agency adjusts to structural changes, our mission remains unchanged. Like the former MDC/Division of Watershed Management, the DCR/Division of Water Supply Protection manages and protects the drinking water supply watersheds for 2.2 million residents of Massachusetts. The Ware River watershed, Quabbin Reservoir watershed, and Wachusett Reservoir watershed are the sources of drinking water for distribution by the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA).

Throughout this final draft of the Ware River Land Management Plan, we have attempted to make appropriate changes in terminology. In some contexts, particularly in historical discussions, the term “Metropolitan District Commission/Division of Watershed Management” or simply MDC or MDC/DWM remain accurate (e.g., “MDC developed land acquisition models in 1998 for the Ware River”). In many instances, DWM or MDC were simply replaced with “the Division” to try to avoid confusion. Readers should be aware that in the context of this plan, “the Division” always refers to the Division of Water Supply Protection or the former Division of Watershed Management, not to any other Division in the Commonwealth. Along these lines, the frequently-used term “Division lands” refers to properties that are owned by the Commonwealth but are under the care and control of the Division of Water Supply Protection.

1.2 Agency Mission and Mandates

The Department of Conservation and Recreation, Division of Water Supply Protection (DCR/DWSP) and the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA) supply drinking water to 47 Massachusetts communities, most of which are in the metropolitan Boston area. The DCR/DWSP is responsible for collection and storage of water, protection of water quality, and management of the watersheds (Quabbin Reservoir, Ware River, Wachusett Reservoir and Sudbury Reservoir – Figure 1). The Division was established in 1984 when the state legislature divided the former MDC Water Division into the new Division of Watershed Management (DWM), responsible for watershed operations and management, and the Massachusetts Water Resources Agency (MWRA), responsible for water distribution and treatment. As noted above, the MDC/DWM became the DCR/DWSP on June 30, 2003.

The DCR is a multi-faceted state agency within the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, responsible for reservations, parks and recreational facilities, parkways, and drinking water supply watersheds. Chapter 372 of the Acts of 1984 established the MDC/DWM and provided its primary mandate. Among other things, this act directed the Division to “...utilize and conserve...water and other natural resources in order to protect, preserve and enhance the environment of the Commonwealth and to assure availability of pure water for future generations.” In addition, the DWM was directed to

periodically prepare watershed management plans to provide for "...forestry, water yield enhancement and recreational activities."

In order to meet the above legislative mandates, the Division established programs in Environmental Quality, Engineering and Construction, Watershed Operations, Public Education, and Natural Resources, all tasked primarily to the protection of this drinking water supply. The long-term goals of the Division are to:

- Ensure availability of clean water for present and future generations.
- Effectively manage, protect, conserve and enhance the natural and structural resources under the responsibility of the DWSP to ensure public health and safety.
- Prevent adverse environmental impacts that could degrade watershed resources.
- Provide educational programs in order to protect watershed resources.
- Conduct research that guides and assists the effective management of watershed resources.
- Develop emergency contingency plans that address existing and potential threats to DWSP resources.

1.3 Plan Overview and Relationship to Other DCR/DWSP Planning

The DCR/DWSP's primary purpose is the long term production and protection of high quality drinking water. The Division prepares and regularly updates a variety of plans to meet this purpose. In addition to Land Management Plans, these include Watershed Protection Plans and Public Access Management Plans. The first Watershed Protection Plan for the Ware River was completed in 1991 as a component of the MWRA Drinking Water Quality Improvement Strategy. This plan was most recently updated for the Ware River in December 2000, and amongst other summaries identifies recreation and unauthorized activities as moderate threats to drinking water supply. The Public Access Management Plans are prepared to address these threats. The most recent Access Plan for the Ware River was completed in January 2000, laying out area and activity restrictions for approximately 30 different recreational uses demanded by the public.

Land Management Plans for DCR/DWSP properties have been written and updated since 1961, when the first "plan" for Quabbin's forests was written in the form of a master's thesis by Fred Hunt, Forest and Park Supervisor. These plans were initially focused forestry and wildlife management plans, but have evolved to more comprehensive plans that now also include land acquisition, cultural resources protection, and the management of biodiversity. The first forest and wildlife management plan for the Division properties on the Ware River was written in 1983 by Stephen Drawbridge, the Division's Ware River Forester.

The 2003-2012 Ware River Land Management Plan is the first comprehensive plan for natural resources on the Ware River watershed. This land management plan proposes methods to effectively manage, protect, and conserve the natural resources on Division watershed properties, with the principal objective of enhancing the protection of the water supply. Developing a management strategy to meet all the needs assigned to the DCR/DWSP is a complicated task. There are numerous constraints that must be considered in developing management options. Effective management requires an ongoing process of reviewing and weighing uses against potential impacts upon the primary goal of water quality protection. This review is followed by carefully crafting policy and management decisions that consider the public's desire to use and enjoy the area, while preserving the primary objective of water supply protection.

The plan outlines DCR/DWSP's management objectives to maintain the most effective, practical, and ecologically sustainable watershed land cover in order to maximize the natural filtering capability of the Division watershed lands surrounding the Ware River intake. The plan also identifies management strategies for land acquisition, wildlife, cultural resources and biodiversity.

The Ware River Watershed Land Management Plan calls for the development and maintenance of a diverse, multi-layered forest cover on much of the watershed, similar to the Quabbin and Wachusett Land Management Plans. This plan primarily focuses on management over the next ten years, but it also considers the forest cover and watershed conditions 60 years in the future. The importance of this long range view is that it plans for a land/forest filter that should continue to function effectively in the face of such events as hurricanes, floods, fires, insect and disease outbreaks, environmental pollution, and other impacts that may be unpredictable to managers today. The Division believes that maintaining a forest cover that is diverse in age classes and species composition represents a conservative strategy for addressing this uncertainty.

The plan's sections include: 1) Introduction, Mandates, and Statement of Mission; 2) Background: Ware River Watershed; 3) Water Resources; 4) Land Protection; 5) Management of Forested Lands Controlled by the Division; 6) Wildlife Management; 7) Management to Protect the Natural Landscape on Division Property; 8) Management to Protect Cultural Resources on Division Property; and 9) Research, Inventory, and Monitoring Needs. The plan is written so that the management components are based on principles outlined in sections that precede them. The Division's intent is for this plan, when implemented, to achieve drinking water protection while also allowing controlled public use of some drinking water supply lands.

1.4 Land Management Planning

1.4.1 Public Input to DCR/DWSP's Land Management Plans

Public input is an important component in the effective management of DCR/DWSP properties. As managers of public land, DCR/DWSP staff has a responsibility to solicit public input in order to address concerns, explain existing management practices, and integrate new ideas, when practical, in order to provide the best possible protection for the drinking water supply. The goals of the Division's public input process for land management on all watersheds are to:

- Regularly solicit public input in order to better understand the broad range of current public issues and concerns regarding forest and wildlife management, so that the Division can better integrate these concerns into protection strategies and the development of goals and objectives for maintaining watershed integrity.
- Educate the public regarding the goals and objectives of the Division with regard to its watershed management program.
- Improve the understanding of both agency staff and the public regarding the technical aspects of forest and wildlife management on the Division's watersheds.
- Work to educate the public regarding strategies for the implementation of the land management program, in order to address concerns and retain public confidence in these strategies.

1.4.2 Regular Revisions to the Ware River Land Management Plan

Progress on implementation of the Ware River Land Management Plan will be presented as a component of an annual public meeting. As a component of this meeting, Forestry and Natural Resources staff will review forest and wildlife management activities, land acquisition progress, and a variety of related research and policy developments.

The plan is written as an DCR/DWSP guidance document for land management activities, and will also serve as a tool for involving the public in the development of land management objectives and strategies. This plan should be viewed as an *adaptive watershed management plan*, to be applied but updated and modified as new properties are added and new information comes to light.

1.4.3 Scientific and Technical Review

Shortly following the writing of the 1995-2004 land management plan for Division properties on the Quabbin Reservoir watershed, the Division organized the first meeting of the Quabbin Science and Technical Advisory Committee (QSTAC). This committee was assembled in an effort to bring Division staff together with professionals in related fields to provide discussion and advice on the technical aspects of watershed management. The committee includes approximately 30 professionals from colleges and organizations throughout the northeast, is co-chaired by a scientist and a Division staff member, and has met with Division resource managers more or less annually since 1996.

Although assembled to address issues arising from management at Quabbin, the QSTAC has discussed issues of broad importance across all Division properties. The writing of this Ware River Watershed Land Management Plan has benefited from past QSTAC discussions where topics have included: optimizing opening sizes for forest regeneration and water protection; management recommendations for areas with special management restrictions (islands, wetlands, steep slopes, designated natural areas); strategies to respond to the effects of the hemlock woolly adelgid; protocol for the release of biocontrol agents (e.g., an imported beetle proposed for release to control the hemlock woolly adelgid); and recommendations for the management of “historical woodlots” (areas on the watersheds that have been managed, but have always been forested).

It is the Division’s intention to continue to meet periodically with this advisory group to explore scientific and technical issues of land management that arise in the implementation of this and other DCR/DWSP land management plans.

FIGURE 1: ACTIVE DWSP WATERSHEDS - BASE MAP

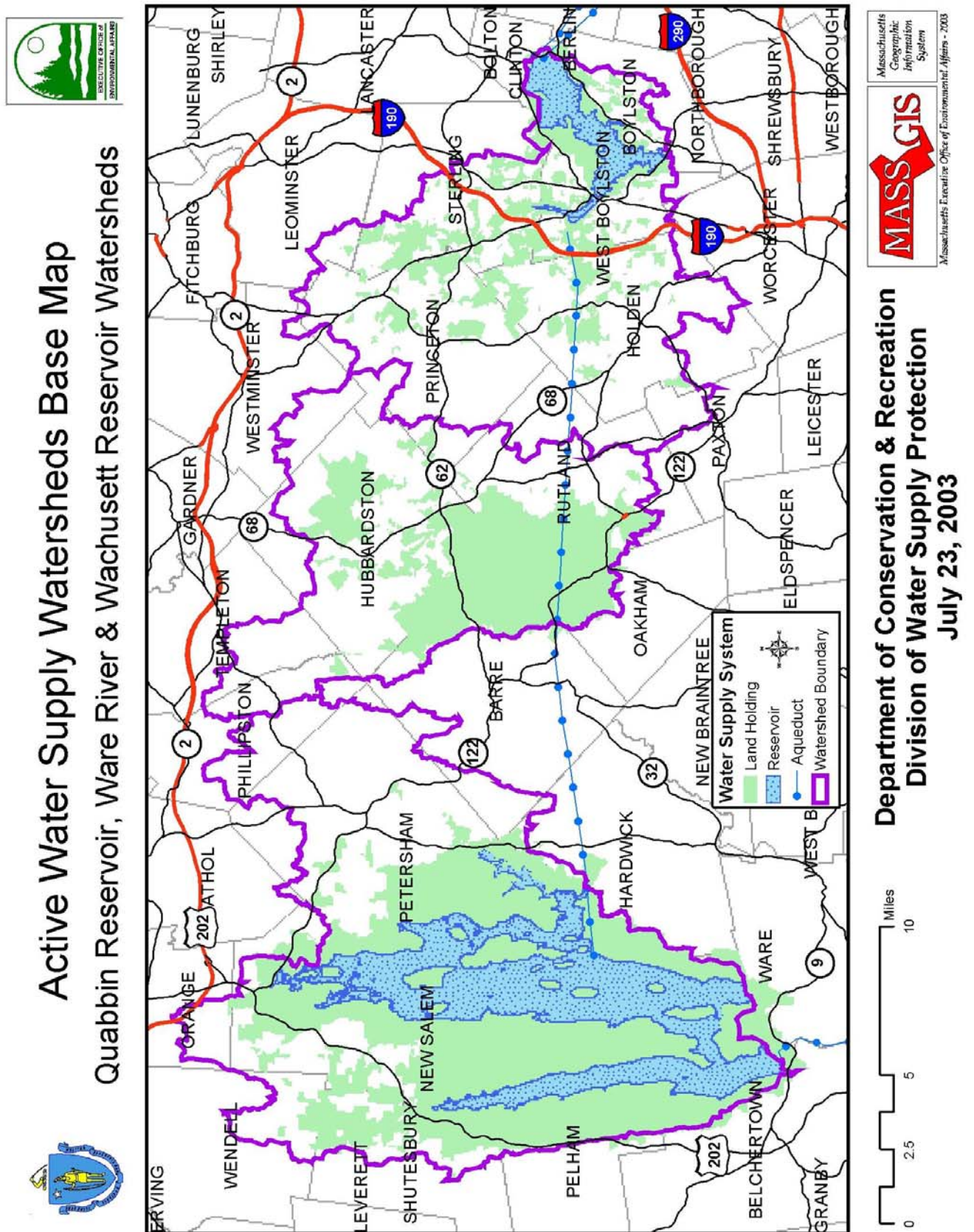


FIGURE 2: WARE RIVER WATERSHED AND SYSTEM MAP

